

Centralized Asset Hub Creates Powerful Magazine Research Tool

Nstein's DAM Helps Increase Productivity & Asset Usage, Decrease Operational & Licensing Costs for Leading Magazine Publisher



Background

If you entertain, decorate, envision the future, dress with style, or even marry – chances are you have read one of this client's magazines. This New York City-based firm has a portfolio featuring many of the world's most prestigious consumer magazine brands. More than three dozen titles are licensed and localized worldwide, and require its staff of editors, photographers and artists to churn out media assets by the hundreds of thousands, all of which need to be packaged, shared with international partners and archived. Before the start of each issue, though, a thorough review of past assets must be explored – before future ones are created.

Business Challenges

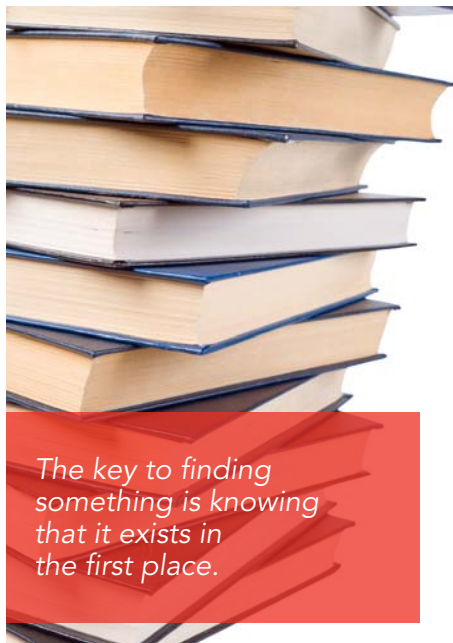
As with all consumer magazines, this media titan relies on a great cover to attract readers – and great covers mean researching through dog-eared archives, PDFs and microfiche, while jogging memories to recall who and what was on the cover, what clothes were worn, which cover lines written and even, which colors used. Ditto for the articles in the magazine. Additionally, the ad staff counts the number of times a prospect's name might be mentioned in an issue – in order to better persuade a sale. Research from all these different perspectives is critical and time-consuming.

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With so many magazines being published throughout the year, the client spent considerable staff hours researching. The search environment consisted of PDFs, (which is slightly better than the bound archives and microfiche that existed pre-2003), keyword searching was often irritatingly inaccurate; headlines were often created as art (not text) and therefore not searchable.

In addition to staff-hours spent hunting for historic information, editors need to be able to handle and index the rapid-fire of new assets (mainly photographs) being created daily. Further, different types of assets were stored in various databases – in various formats. A search for a photo of red stilettos might finally be found – only to be in the wrong resolution. For photo editors it was more fruitful (and less time-consuming) to turn to a photo syndication house and ante up the licensing fee than to keep looking for an asset in a proverbial haystack. The lifecycle of an asset is two-fold: first run and syndication. In this case, syndication largely meant repurposing the assets between aggregators like Lexus-Nexis, Corbis, Getty and Proquest, in addition to internal partners to allow a localized product to be created. Sharing needed to be in the context of rights usage agreements, so assets needed to be carefully calibrated and monitored.

Goals



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The goal was to move all assets and pages created in the last five years into a centralized and searchable repository to which appropriate staff would have access. The challenge was to understand the workflow for the myriad of staffers (from offices literally around the world) and design a system that would mirror that workflow while putting safeguards in place so assets were used properly. This would allow the editorial staff to fully manage and edit assets as well as perform advanced search and retrieval – no matter which publication they were with. Another goal was to design the system so that each asset had pointers to the actual publication page(s) it appeared on.

The Solution

Nstein's professional services team and the client kicked off the engagement in March 2007. The first phase, which took a few months, was to discover and define each of the types of users, the types of assets – and types of permissions (and limitations) each staffer and asset needed. With literally millions of assets with varying rights usage and thousands of employees literally all over the globe, it was a monumental task. "Discovery was a complex yet critical step," explained the publishing company's Information Technology Director. "Each title and each locale had different employees with disparate job functions, so defining appropriate staff required a diligent discovery. In the end, we had so many spreadsheets, even at 6pt we still would have been able to cover the walls."

A second step was the implementation of Nstein's Text Mining Engine (TME) and its categorization, Nconcept extractor and Nfinder modules. This powerful semantic analysis tool parses sentences identifying categories, key concepts and controlled vocabularies. After an asset was converted to XML, it was run through TME for automatic tagging. The results are rich metadata that accurately and thoroughly describes each asset helping editors find relevant assets.



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After the discovery phase, Nstein began configuring its Digital Asset Management (DAM) software to allow editors to search for assets, determine when and where those were used, export to 3rd parties, and marry rich metadata for each asset. Nearly as important as access to assets, was control over that access. Role-based permissions were created.

The Payoff

The powerful asset hub powered by Nstein was rolled out in January 2008 to resounding success. Once the staff was trained, it was estimated that nearly four production days were saved because of the new tool – increasing operational efficiencies by nearly 25%. The IT Director measures the success of the new research tool in several ways. "With a push of a button we can export to Lexis-Nexis, we've managed to retire 6 different storage management systems and we can repurpose images easily – without paying a 3rd party fulfillment firm," he listed. "We've been able to substantially reduce the tremendous amount of hours it took for advertising and editorial staff to research past issues."



And how did the editors, a breed of people who traditionally are skeptical of any change, take to the new tool? "Amazingly well, we haven't heard any complaints," he laughed.

Nstein
Powering Digital Publishing

Nstein Technologies (TSX-V: EIN) develops and markets multilingual solutions that power digital publishing for the most prestigious newspapers, magazines, and content-driven organizations. Nstein's solutions generate new revenue opportunities and reduce operational costs by enabling the centralization, management and automated indexing of digital assets. Nstein partners with clients to design a complete digital strategy for success using publishing industry best practices for the implementation of its Web Content Management, Digital Asset Management, Text Mining Engine and Picture Management Desk products.

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